

Pheasant Restoration Initiative

The Michigan Pheasant Restoration Initiative (MPRI) is an opportunity for neighboring landowners to work together to restore habitat by building landowner cooperatives! The goal of the plan is to double Michigan's current pheasant harvest. The plan will also have a tremendous impact on hunter retention and recruitment in the state.

"There are more than 50,000 hunters who pursue pheasants annually in Michigan, and we can do better at meeting their demand for opportunity," says Mike Parker, Private Lands Biologist for the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, "It's a given that when you have an abundance of quality habitat, you have pheasants. Revitalizing habitat - nesting cover, escape cover and food, and winter cover - is the key to revitalizing pheasant hunting in Michigan."

The key difference between past efforts and the new Pheasant Restoration

Initiative, Parker says, is the broad landscape scale. Previous efforts have been successful on smaller scales, improving 40 acres for a landowner here, and 40 acres for a landowner there. But to maximize pheasant hunting, we need to broaden the focus. The goal will be to restore pheasant habitat on 15 to 30 percent of the landscape within the Pheasant Recovery Areas, utilizing state land where possible. The long-range objective is to have 200 or so 10,000 acre Pheasant Recovery Areas in the state, or 2 million acres in the program.

What is a Landowner Cooperative? Landowners living near each other must work together by adding and enhancing habitat as a whole, not as individual pieces. Co-ops would need to see changes to habitat of approximately 1,200 acres in a 10,000 acre block. Habitat can be restored and enhanced to include nest cover, winter cover, & winter food, and have connectivity from property to property. Grassland and farmland are crucial to pheasant habitat. Any pheasant habitat is also beneficial for song birds, migratory birds, deer and other wildlife species.

To learn more about the program and to get started working together with surrounding landowners, call the Tuscola Conservation District office at 989-673-8174 ext. 3 and our biologist will come out to look over your land, gather local partners, and give you advice on how to improve your land for wildlife habitat.

Thank you to the following organizations & agencies who provide support and funding for this important new program: Pheasants Forever, Michigan United Conservation Clubs, Ducks Unlimited, Conservation Districts, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Michigan Department of Agriculture, Michigan State University Extension, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services.